

PRESS RELEASE
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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
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**REPORT ON THE SUBJECT 'EVALUATION OF INDIA'S INDIAN OCEAN
STRATEGY'**

The Committee on External Affairs headed by Dr. Shashi Tharoor presented their Eighth Report on the subject 'Evaluation of India's Indian Ocean Strategy' in Lok Sabha today *i.e.* 11.08.2025

**SOME OF THE IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AS
FOLLOWS:**

1. India's strategic leadership in the Indian Ocean Region emphasized

Recognizing the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as a strategic, economic, and environmental lifeline for India, the Committee has strongly recommended that India should adopt a more assertive leadership role in the region. With 90% of India's trade passing through the IOR and its pivotal geographic position, India's security and prosperity are intrinsically linked to the region's stability. The Committee emphasized that initiatives like Vision SAGAR and Vision MAHASAGAR highlight India's commitment to a cooperative, rules-based maritime order. It urged the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to strengthen bilateral and multilateral ties, enhance defence cooperation, and safeguard the region's sustainability, reinforcing India's role as the key guardian of the Indian Ocean.

(Recommendation No. 1)

2. Tailored strategic engagement plan for all Indian Ocean Littoral States suggested

Acknowledging the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Committee has recommended that India should formulate a comprehensive and flexible strategic engagement plan covering all 35 littoral states. This plan should

be rooted in shared interests and adapted to the unique geopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts of each country or sub-region. Key focus areas should include maritime security, climate resilience, infrastructure development, defence cooperation, anti-piracy, counter-terrorism, and trade promotion. Specific attention is urged for strengthening ties with island nations, South Asian neighbours, East African states, and partners like Australia. The Committee emphasized that a tailored and dynamic approach will bolster India's strategic influence, promote regional stability, and safeguard national interests in the IOR.

(Recommendation No. 3)

3. More clarity and coherence in India's SAGAR and MAHASAGAR Strategies recommended.

The Committee has recommended a comprehensive review of India's dual maritime strategies, namely SAGAR (Security and Growth for All) and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), citing overlaps and ambiguities in their objectives that risk diluting strategic coherence. While SAGAR focuses on security and growth within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), MAHASAGAR expands this vision to include the broader Global South, particularly Africa. The Committee observed that the lack of distinction between the two frameworks creates confusion and undermines India's unified strategic posture in the region. To enhance alignment, precision, and effectiveness, the Committee urged the Ministry of External Affairs to reassess and streamline these initiatives, and to report its findings within three months.

(Recommendation No. 4)

4. Integrating India's Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific strategies.

The Committee has recommended that India should develop a unified and coherent maritime strategy that seamlessly integrates its Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific policies. Recognizing these regions as a single strategic space facing common challenges, particularly in maritime security, the Committee noted that India's current approach lacks alignment. While the Indo-Pacific framework offers a broad vision, it must be

strategically linked with India's Indian Ocean initiatives to enhance effectiveness. In light of increasing Chinese assertiveness, the Committee also underscored the importance of India acting as a stabilizing force by strengthening cooperation through key multilateral platforms such as the Quad, IORA, and ASEAN.

(Recommendation No 5)

5. Establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Task Force.

Highlighting the complex and multi-dimensional nature of India's engagement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Committee has recommended the establishment of a dedicated Inter-Ministerial Task Force. The proposed task force, comprising key ministries such as External Affairs, Defence, Commerce, Environment, Shipping, Finance, and Home Affairs, would address existing institutional silos, streamline decision-making, and enable faster, better-coordinated execution of India's interests in the region.

(Recommendation No 6)

6. Green MAHASAGAR' for sustainable Indian Oceans Future.

In view of the ecological vulnerability and economic potential of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Committee has urged the Ministry of External Affairs to integrate environmental sustainability into India's regional strategy. Emphasizing the need for greater cooperation on marine conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable use of ocean resources, the Committee recommended aligning India's Indian Ocean policy with global and regional environmental goals. To this end, the Committee has recommended that India should champion the cause of a 'Green MAHASAGAR' which is focused on joint efforts with littoral states for marine ecosystem protection, pollution reduction, disaster response, and promotion of the Blue Economy. The Committee stressed that India must lead in shaping a climate-conscious and economically inclusive maritime future for the region.

(Recommendation No. 7)

7. Strengthening maritime strategy to counter Chinese Expansion and Influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

The Committee has expressed serious concern over China's expanding naval presence and strategic infrastructure in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), highlighting the risks this poses to India's national security and regional influence. Noting China's rapidly growing naval capabilities and its strengthening ties with Pakistan, the Committee urged the Government to take decisive action by enhancing India's maritime deterrence through advanced technologies, including satellite surveillance and AI-driven Maritime Domain Awareness. It also recommended upgrading naval assets, boosting anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and expanding strategic partnerships, particularly within the Quad and with IOR littoral states, to maintain regional balance and safeguard India's strategic autonomy in the face of escalating challenges.

(Recommendation No.9)

8. India's Maritime Strategy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

The Committee has emphasized the need to elevate India's maritime strategy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to a top foreign policy priority, to address evolving security challenges and geopolitical shifts. While commending the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, and law enforcement agencies for their efforts, including Exercise Sea Vigil and enhanced coordination through the NC31 network, the Committee stressed that India's strategy requires greater clarity, depth, and consistent funding. It therefore, recommended prioritizing the modernization of naval capabilities, ensuring robust long-term funding, and improving inter-agency coordination to establish a unified, comprehensive approach that effectively safeguards India's strategic interests and asserts its influence across the IOR.

(Recommendation No.12)

9. Modernization and Strengthening of Role of the Indian Navy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

The Committee emphasized the crucial role of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard in safeguarding India's maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region amid growing

threats like piracy and terrorism. While recognizing their strong operational performance, the Committee identified urgent needs to improve fleet readiness, personnel training, and logistics support. It also recommended accelerating the modernization of naval forces by prioritizing indigenous development under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, including the induction of next-generation submarines, destroyers, carrier-based fighters, and advanced patrol vessels and surveillance aircraft for the Coast Guard to enhance India's maritime security and deterrence capabilities.

(Recommendation No.13)

10. Clear objectives and metrics for Sagarmala 2.0 called upon.

Sagarmala is the Government of India's flagship initiative aimed at enhancing port connectivity, developing inland waterways, and driving industrial growth. To further strengthen India's maritime competitiveness, Sagarmala 2.0 had been launched. However, the Committee noted that the Ministry of External Affairs has not clearly articulated the specific objectives and features of Sagarmala 2.0. It therefore, recommended that the Ministry should explicitly outline its goals, with a focus on advancing smart port infrastructure, integrating digital technologies, and creating multimodal transport networks. Additionally, defining clear metrics and performance indicators will help distinguish Sagarmala 2.0 from its predecessor, enabling more effective impact assessment.

(Recommendation No.16)

11. Enhancing Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomacy

Recognizing India's active role in key multilateral and regional platforms such as IORA, IPOI, BIMSTEC, Quad, and MGC, the Committee has emphasized the need for greater strategic coherence to effectively advance the country's geopolitical, economic, and security interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It has recommended strengthening bilateral mechanisms to protect the rights and welfare of Indian fishermen who inadvertently cross maritime boundaries. Additionally, the Committee urged the Government to adopt a more outcome-driven and aligned approach across

various initiatives, supported by enhanced inter-ministerial coordination, increased financial and technical resources, and regular performance evaluations. The Committee also stressed the need for establishing a centralized coordinating mechanism within the Ministry of External Affairs to drive synergy and streamline efforts across overlapping forums.

(Recommendation No.18)

12. MEA urged to revitalize Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), established in 1987 with its Secretariat in Mauritius, was created to restore the historic pan-Indian Ocean connectivity among nations. Over time, IORA has expanded to include 23 Member States and 12 Dialogue Partners. However, the Committee believes that IORA's potential as a transformative platform for regional economic growth, sustainable development, and maritime cooperation remains underutilized. With India set to assume the Chairmanship of IORA from 2025-2027, the Committee strongly recommended that India should take a leading role in revitalizing the organization. Key steps should include strengthening IORA's institutional framework and governance, streamlining the Secretariat's operations, enhancing coordination among Member States, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms to improve project implementation and impact.

(Recommendation No.19)

13. Strengthening collaborative efforts under the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI) recommended.

The Committee note the progress of the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019, which promotes collaborative, project-based solutions to maritime challenges. However, with just 13 current members, the Committee believe IPOI's impact is limited. To enhance its effectiveness, the Committee recommended expanding membership to include more countries with significant maritime interests. India should also take a leading role in strengthening collaboration across IPOI's seven pillars: Maritime Security, Maritime

Ecology, Maritime Resources, Capacity Building, Disaster Risk Reduction, Science & Technology Cooperation, and Trade Connectivity. The Committee also emphasized the need to address emerging issues such as cybersecurity, regional health cooperation, and disaster resilience within IPOI's framework.

(Recommendation No.21)

14. Enhancing India's Role in Quad's Maritime Security Cooperation

The Committee has recognized the evolving role of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) in promoting a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, aligning with India's maritime vision through SAGAR and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). While noting India's cautious stance towards a security-centric Quad due to its policy of multi-alignment, the Committee recommended exploring a more flexible security dimension within the Quad framework by including joint maritime exercises in the Indian Ocean to enhance maritime domain awareness, improve coordination, and address emerging security threats. Proactive, non-confrontational initiatives focused on capacity-building and joint exercises could strengthen regional stability and reinforce India's position as a responsible maritime power in the region.

(Recommendation No.24)

15. Leveraging India's Chairmanship of IONS for enhanced maritime cooperation

The Committee emphasized the importance of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in fostering regional cooperation on maritime security challenges. With India set to assume the Chairmanship of IONS for 2025-2027, the Committee urged the Government to leverage this opportunity to address emerging non-traditional security threats such as IUU fishing and climate change. India should promote greater collaboration by facilitating information-sharing between governments, industries, and stakeholders. Additionally, the Committee also recommended intensifying efforts to enhance interoperability among IONS navies through regular joint exercises and the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

(Recommendation No.29)

16. Enhancing India's cultural footprint in the Indian Ocean Region

While recognizing the importance of cultural diplomacy in deepening India's ties with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Committee emphasized initiatives such as Cultural Centers, art performances, and heritage promotion. To enhance these efforts, the Committee strongly urged that Indian Missions and Cultural Centers be better resourced and supported by increasing funding for a wide range of cultural activities like events, exhibitions, and festivals to showcase India's rich cultural diversity.

(Recommendation No.31)